THE NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • TUESDAY • DECEMBER 29, 2020 • ₹7.00 • PAGES 18 • LATE CITY EDITION

READ SHARE FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com
facebook.com/thenewindianexpress twitter.com/newindianexpress
instagram.com/newindianexpress

VIRAT KOHLI HEADLINES ICC'S PLAYERS OF DECADE HONOURS

India captain wins Sir Garfield Sobers award for the best Male Cricketer of the Decade. Named ODI Player of the Decade too.

BEATS DE VILLIERS, SANGA TO TOP AWARD

Kohli beat R Ashwin, Joe Root, Kumar Sangakkara, Steve Smith, AB de Villiers and Kane Williamson for Player of the Decade award. 66 out of his 70 international centuries came in this decade. He was also the batsman with most fifties (94), most runs (20,396), besides having the maximum average (56.97) among players with 70 innings | P13

DHONI WINS SPIRIT OF CRICKET AWARD

- MS Dhoni won the 'ICC Spirit of Cricket Award of the Decade', chosen by fans for his gesture of calling back England batsman Ian Bell after a bizarre run out in the Nottingham Test in 2011
- Steve Smith was chosen the Test Cricketer of the Decade, while Afghanistan's Rashid Khan bagged the top prize in T20Is

KOHLI IS THE ONLY PLAYER TO MAKE IT TO THREE ICC TEAMS OF THE DECADE

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

New Year's gift, Covishield to get nod soon: Serum Institute

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA & CHETANA BELAGERE
@ New Delhi, Bengaluru

ADAR Poonawalla, CEO of Serum Institute of India, on Monday said that regulatory approvals for Covid-19 vaccine Covishield in India are expected in a "few days".

The statement comes days after the company, the Indian manufacturing and clinical trial partner for the vaccine by Oxford University and AstraZeneca, submitted additional data to the Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation for evaluation in follow up to its application for the emergency-use authorisation of the vaccine.

The CDSCO is waiting for the UK to give the nod to the vaccine first. Asked if SII is anxious about the approval not coming through, Poonawalla said, "We must respect the drug regulator's decision to completely review the clinical evaluations in other countries and in India to ascertain the safety and immunogenicity standards of the vaccine before granting any emergency authorisation for the vaccine here."

Poonawalla, while launching the first indigenously developed pneumonia vaccine for children in the country, also said that his firm is ready with a stockpile of about 40-50 million doses of Covishield.

Covishield is being tested on about 1,700 individuals in the country as part of a multi-country Phase 3 trial of the vaccine which has shown about 70 per cent accuracy on an average in two different dosing regimens.

In response to a query on how much of the readied stockpile will the country get, he said, "India has such a large population that we will probably end up giving the majority of those 50 million doses here first." P9

SII DEVELOPS PNEUMONIA VACCINE

New Delhi: Serum Institute of India on Monday launched the country's first indigenously developed pneumococcal vaccine PNEUMOSIL for children in the presence of Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan

Wednesday date set for fresh talks with farmers

Unions accept govt invite; no meeting ground yet on the 3 laws

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

THE sixth round of talks between the government and the agitating farmers will be held on Wednesday, with the Centre sending a formal invite to 40 kisan unions on Monday. The unions have also conveyed their consent.

Union Agriculture Secretary Sanjay Aggarwal's letter referred to the response of the unions on December 26, accepting the Centre's offer for talks, and invited them to Vigyan Bhawan in Delhi at 2 pm on December 30 for the dialogue. He reiterated the Centre's commitment to find a 'logical resolution' with an open mind and clear intention.

"During this meeting, the concerns of farmers regarding the three farm laws, system of procurement on MSP, ordinance 2020 on Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas, besides amending the draft Electricity Amendment Bill, 2020, would be discussed in detail," the one-page letter stated.

But arriving at a common ground will not be easy, as the farmer unions want nothing short of the repeal of the three laws, while the Centre is willing to make amendments, but not take the rollback road.

When the Samyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella group of 40 farmer unions, wrote to the government on Saturday, proposing talks, it had laid out a stiff four-point agenda, beginning with the modalities for repealing the three laws. The Centre's letter on Monday mentions the other three points flagged by the unions, but skirts the repeal part.

Bharatiya Kisan Union (Lakhowal) general secretary Harinder Singh Lakhowal said, "We decided to attend the December 30 meeting, as we do not want to give the government any chance to say that the farmers backed out of discussions. However, there is no change in our demands."

Reacting to the vandalisation of over 1,500 telecom towers in Punjab so far, Lakhowal said, "We did not give any call to cut power supply to towers of a specific mobile company, as it would affect studies of students at the time of the pandemic. We only requested people to get their mobile numbers ported to any other mobile operators in protest."

As for the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, it found the Centre's letter cleverly worded, while not willing to discuss the full agenda proposed by the farmers. P9

Farmers during their agitation, at Ghazipur border in New Delhi on Monday | P11

'Pawar wanted to do it'

Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said former PM Manmohan Singh and agriculture minister Sharad Pawar wanted to bring farm reforms during UPA rule, but couldn't due to political pressure

Govt to survey migrants, help them with social security

MG CHETAN @ Bengaluru

The State Government has decided to conduct a survey of those who returned to their villages from cities at the height of Covid-19 pandemic to allow them to get social security through various government schemes.

The Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) has been tasked with the job of collecting details of these migrants. The survey was expected to be launched over a month ago but had to be stalled as the model code of conduct for the Gram Panchayat elections kicked in. The Panchayat Raj department officials are now gearing up to launch the survey soon.

As per the data already available with the officials, around 3.5 lakh people returned to villages till May. "The numbers may have increased now. During the survey, their name, age, number of dependents, etc. will be collected. Also, details of the work they used to do in cities and whether they are employed in villages will be gathered." P3

1. Gathering of five or more people and celebrating New Year on public roads and in public places strictly prohibited
2. Managements of establishments shall allow guests only with advance bookings, for which a proof of booking shall be issued
3. Prohibitory orders to be in place from 6 pm on December 31, 2020, to 6 am on January 1, 2021
4. No New Year's Eve celebration of any type, involving a large gathering shall be held in any open place, parks or grounds
5. Hotels, malls, restaurants, clubs, pubs, club houses or similar establishments hosting New Year celebrations shall not organise any special events such as DJ nights, music shows, bands, dance programmes or performances

• FULL REPORT P2

Apart from the associated tragedies and challenges, the Year 2020 will be remembered for several health reasons

A YEAR WHEN HEALTH TOOK OVER OUR MINDSPACE

DR GIRIDHARA R BABU

As the world began to respond to the pandemic, the premise was that LMICs (low and middle-income countries) like India would have major problems, since the developed countries didn't do well. This was supported by health security indicators which rank the US and UK at first and second position. Not only did this idea have to bite the dust, but India also showed how to swiftly mount a response, inspire countries in the region and emerge as a vaccine powerhouse for the world. 2020 is a year that belongs to South Asian nations, regarding how well the region did its best in healthcare, although much of the action remains.

2020 can be better remembered as a year for prioritising health. Although it requires many course corrections, health was on election manifestos, in public discourse, and on everyone's mind. 2020 is also a watershed moment for showcasing India's capacity for innovative solutions that usher in hope to resolve chronic problems plaguing healthcare delivery.

These include massive scale-up of supply chain systems for healthcare services, fast-tracking the review of rapid diagnostic kits and vaccines, use of technology such as Aarogya Setu or other apps. There are caveats to this optimistic scenario. First, ethics and efficacy of interventions are as important as the speed of delivery. Next, tech solutions cannot be black mystery boxes but should complement the health system's existing capacity and strengths. A review of ideas used during the crisis can guide the initiation of transformational changes in the future.

At times, the country heard from epidemiologists, virologists and immunologists in shaping the Covid-19 response. One would not expect an economist to do heart surgery, but we still heavily rely on a popular doctor or economist's advice on how to manage epidemics.

If nothing else, 2020 should be remembered for the need to create and nurture a competent and professional public health workforce. This is possible by hiring and offering better salaries for domain experts and investing in improving their efficiency through constant training and reorientation. All these experts need to undergo leadership development programmes focusing on improving the overall quality and efficiency of the health system response.

CONTINUED ON: P6

HOUSE
SESSION IN JANUARY

A Legislative session is likely to be held in January, and the state cabinet has discussed the issue. However, the date for the session has not yet been decided | P4

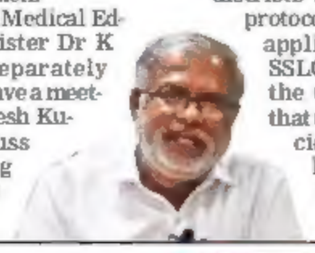
Classes 8, 9 may reopen from Jan 15: Kumar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

DETERMINED to get offline classes rolling soon, Primary and Secondary Education Minister S Suresh Kumar is considering getting students of Classes 8 and 9 to physical classrooms from January 15, besides writing to all the legislators and district administrators to advise, instruct and guide officials of various departments on the resumption of Classes 10 and 12 from January 1.

While it was already decided to reopen offline classes for Class 11 from January 15 after keeping a close watch on the performance of reopening and conduct of Classes 10 and 12 from January 1, Kumar on Monday said he is now considering how it can be extended to Classes 8 and 9 too from January 15. But an official decision is yet to be taken.

Health and Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar separately said, "I will have a meeting with Suresh Kumar to discuss the reopening of schools and PU colleges after the cabinet meeting. Covid cases and deaths have reduced and there is no need to panic."



Suresh Kumar is seeking the coordination of all departments concerned to reopen the classes on the lines of successfully conducting the SSLC exam in the districts with Covid-19 safety protocols in place. The SOPs applied for holding the SSLC exam so impressed the Central authorities that the UPSC, too, has decided to adopt them for holding various exams. P2

Dept mulls reopening of govt schools

Suresh Kumar, during an interaction with educationist V P Niranjanaradhya, said he will consider the latter's suggestion to reopen government schools with fewer students